

*PUBLIC and  
STATE  
LANDS  
of ARIZONA*



CEMENT CANAL SALT RIVER IRRIGATION PROJECT



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# PUBLIC and STATE LANDS of ARIZONA

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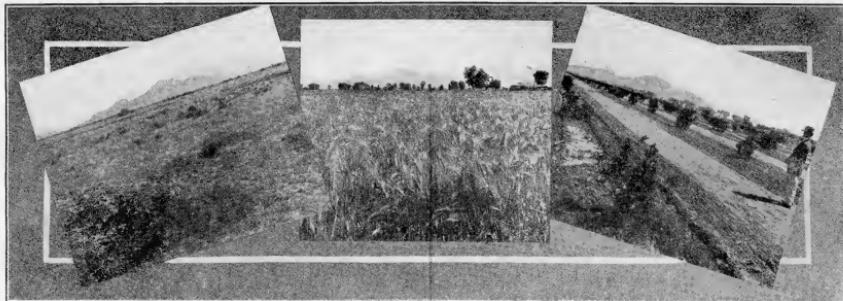
As the available public lands of the country become less and less each year, homeseekers naturally turn to those states where the area of public land is greatest. Arizona, as measured in miles, is the fifth largest in the Union. Considering that the population is small, very small, as compared with the area, the assumption would be natural that there should be greater opportunities for those people who seek new homes where land is free.

To those who are making inquiry relative to the lands of Arizona there is due them some explanation. In the first place, while only a small percentage of the area of Arizona is under cultivation, wonderful stories of the productivity of those few acres have been spread broadcast throughout the civilized world. The building of the Roosevelt Dam, which waters a considerable portion of the former desert country, known as the Salt River Valley, together with the success of American Egyptian long staple cotton, has served to advertise Arizona as a whole, especially the possibilities in agricultural lines. To the uninitiated, it might well seem that if one part of the state could be made to produce, then why not all.

Sometimes it is wise in analyzing a proposition, to bring into use, the law of elimination. We will try this method, and consider the state as a whole. First, the area is almost 73,000,000 acres. Of this, the Government still retains something over 12,000,000 acres in National Forests, and more than one-half million acres in National Parks and Monuments. The Indian Reservations within the boundaries of Arizona total almost 22,000,000 acres. This accounts for almost one-half of the total area of the state.

The government was liberal when Arizona assumed the duties of statehood in 1912, for it gave the state a total area of about 11,000,000 acres. A



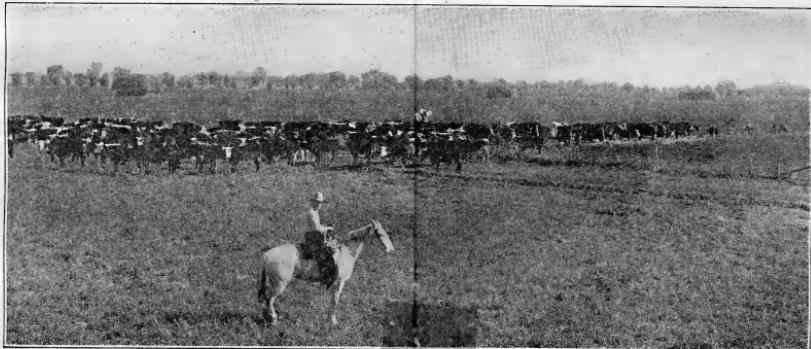


THE DESERT.—THE DESERT RECLAIMED.—THE DESERT RECLAIMED AND PLANTED TO CITRUS TREES

part of this has been sold to homeseekers, on very favorable terms, and the balance of it is leased mostly to cattle men for grazing purposes. This leased land totals something like 9,000,000 acres, possibly more. Now it would be possible for the state to sell some of this land instead of leasing it, but the greater proportion of this leased land is of such character and so located that it could not be developed for agricultural purposes except on a large scale, far beyond the means of the

ordinary homeseeker. Under the present leasing system some revenue is returned to the state and the lands are being held in the ownership of the state until such a time when private capital or the state will develop irrigation projects, by which these lands may be opened up to genuine home-seekers. So much for the state lands.

Now we come to the great area commonly known as the Public Domain. The last figures available from the U. S. Land Office show that



CATTLE FROM THE ARIZONA RANGES FATTENED FOR MARKET ON THE IRRIGATED FARMS

there was a total of 20,714,785 acres of such lands, about two-thirds of which is still unsurveyed and it will require some time to survey the remainder. The homeseekers who look at the figures and see that we have an area of 20,000,000 acres, wonder why there should not in all that vast area be some place where they could make a home. They are entitled to some further information.

For fifty years, despite hardships that the pioneers experienced; despite the numerous depredations of the savage Apache; despite drawbacks which settlers in other parts of the United States did not have to suffer, homesteaders have continued to come to Arizona, settling on the choicest land. Land here is in most cases valueless without water, and so when we say the choicest land we mean fertile soil, in a reasonably good location, where there is a possibility of obtaining water. Water is obtained in several ways—from streams by gravity flow or by pumping, or from the underground water when it is available. The streams of Arizona are not many, particularly in the part of the state where agriculture is at its best. These streams too, have a habit of running full and overflowing at certain seasons of the year and then for a large part of the year are mere beds of sand. Usually the water comes when it is less needed and in too large quantities to be made use of, then when water is most needed, the streams are dry. This adds to the problem of the farmers who would make use of the water of these streams. For the individual farmer to build dams and store this water, is out of the question. Collectively, farmers have built brush and stone dams across many of the streams. In fact, this was the method used by the early settlers of the Salt River Valley before the days of the building of the Roosevelt Dam. Often when there is a flood, these brush and stone dams wash out, necessitating rebuilding, so that even when a number of farmers join together to form a small irrigation project their troubles are plenty. This explains why irrigation in order to be successful must be handled on a large scale, by government financing or by other capital.

Practically all the locations where water could be brought out on to the land at small expense by small groups of farmers are already taken up. There are great areas of land where the under-

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A Farm and Home Garden in the Irrigated Section  
of Arizona

ground water is not too far beneath the surface to make pumping feasible. The best known example of such land in Arizona is Casa Grande Valley. Land of this character, however, has also been pretty well settled upon.

Consequently of all this vast area of 20,000,000 acres, plus the land which the state owns or is leasing, there is a comparatively small part which is attractive to the individual homeseeker unless he can join with others in developing an irrigation project and interesting the government or other capital in financing means of developing or storing water.

Recent developments warrant the belief that the next few years will show greater extension of irrigation over these areas which are now desert. These developments, however, will have to come by the collective effort of land owners and the co-operation of either the government or capitalists.

There are several million acres scattered about the state which are, so far as can be judged, as fertile and as capable of development as the Salt River Valley, the success of which has been too well demonstrated to question. Just which areas will be developed first no one can say. At the present time it seems very probable that a reservoir may be built on the Gila River near San Carlos, which will irrigate a considerable portion of the Casa Grande Valley. There are other areas on the Gila River which will also be developed. There is another area north of the Salt River valley, known as the Paradise valley, which will probably be brought under irrigation

and eventually may become a part of the Salt River Valley project. Most of the lands under these projects now being planned, are in private ownership, although the state owns some lands under both projects.

In the Colorado Basin there is a great area of land which should and eventually will be irrigated from the Colorado River. This will require the building of immense reservoirs on the Colorado river to store the waters which come down at flood time for use during the balance of the year. Such reservoirs and irrigation systems will cost many millions of dollars but would add several million acres to the area now irrigated.

In a measure supplementary to these storage projects, there will be the development of land by water from the underground streams, and by the production of electric energy from streams. As the area of irrigated lands extends, the amount of underground water seems to increase and paradoxical as it may seem at first thought, the irrigation by means of gravity increases the available area of lands which may be developed by pumping. The individual homeseeker can develop water by no other means except by pumping at the present time. Pumping plants have increased in efficiency to a marked degree within the last few years. The cost of a well and pumping plant is considerable and to the man without means, it is almost as impossible to reclaim the desert land with a well and pump as it is to build dams across the streams, nevertheless there is a great deal of development of this kind and will continue to be.

As reservoirs are built and hydro electric power developed, this power becomes available for pumping and is the cheapest power which can be had for operating the pumps. It may thus be seen that the building of reservoirs, the develop-



Long Staple Egyptian Cotton as Grown on the  
Irrigated Farms of Arizona



**Bridge Over Salt River at Tempe, on Arizona State Highway**

ment of gravity irrigation projects, will be the greatest factors in the development of lands by wells and pumps and in consequence will increase our available area of agricultural lands.

These factors may be discouraging to the homeseeker, but it is only right that he should understand fully the situation and should not have illusions of obtaining from the government or from the state a home under those same favorable conditions which the homeseekers had who settled the plains of Kansas or the prairies of the Dakotas during the past generation. To the homeseeker who has capital to live upon while he acquires title, who has a vision of the possibilities of the future, and can select land which some day will be in the path of some big irrigation project, there are still opportunities, but to the poor man who must produce a living from the land upon which he locates, the desert with all its charms is forbidding.

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